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133 alkaline plains and approaches the marshy lakes that are abundantly
137 present in the rainy season and frequently absent in the dry period. The acacia and the eucalyptus are familiar and frequent in both the low and the high lands, and spear grass covers the land in dense growths during the months of rain.

136 The animals, with certain minor variations, are the usual marsupials and monotremes found in Australia, with the bat and wild domestic dog the only mammalia living in the region. Nature is bountiful with
[262] many varieties of birds, fish, and other animals; but vegetable foods, although plentiful, are limited in variety.

●144 The Murngin people belong to the aboriginal Australoid race found throughout Australia—not Mongoloid, Negroid, or Caucasian, but a variant group which seems to be a blend of many of the features of the
[197] white and black races.[2] Their language is one of the Australo-Dravidian linguistic group. They belong to a Stone Age culture; were they placed
105 in our own chronology, their technological development would fall somewhere between the Old and the New Stone Ages.

The Murngin civilization is a simple Australian culture with a small hunting and gathering population which lives off the sea and the land. The natural environment which surrounds it and drastically affects native behavior consists of *two changes which make up the yearly cycle*; one of these is extremely rainy, producing a period of scarcity, and the other a dry period when there is an abundance of food. The technology can be described briefly as the adaptive mechanisms of the general society to these two parts of the cycle of nature.

614 The social organization must be given in a more detailed description.
423 The fundamental basis of the society is an elaborate kinship[3] system in which everyone is related to everyone else. This kinship system is organized into more general units which are patrilineal,[3] exogamic[3] clans[3] which have local territories that were "given to them by the totems."[3] All parts of the clan land have totemic references. Each clan has multiple totems; all clans have at least one, possibly more, sacred water holes where live the high totems, the totemic ancestors, the ancestral dead, and the totemic spirits of the unborn. The names of all clansmen have totemic significance, and the whole general totemic pattern is related to the clan.

[101] [2] See Appendix VII.—The term "Black" in the title of this book, *A Black Civilization*, is not to be interpreted as describing these people as purely Negroid. The term refers, rather, to their popular name, "Australian Blacks," and to the name they accept for themselves from the Australian whites, "Blackfellows."

[3] See Glossary of Technical Terms, page 566.

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for the Malay in the native cosmic ideology, just as the myths have been added to in order to account for the white man and his civilization; but all these changes are purely superficial and but additional facts seeded into native cosmologies.

At the end of their visits in Australia the Malays always lifted their masts, which had been taken down, and fastened them securely to the decks as part of their final preparation for departure. It is possible that there was a slight ceremony involved in this. The Murngin have taken the activities that surrounded the raising of the mast and transplanted them as a ritual into part of their burial ceremony. This has not been done by all of the clans, but is confined to only a few of the groups of the Yiritja moiety. The lifting of the mast by the Malays meant to the Murngin that they were leaving for that year, and, in a way, it symbolized their farewell to Australia in the minds of the Murngin. The idea of the departure of the Malay ship has been transferred to the idea of the departure of the soul of the dead.

The corpse is lifted in the same way as Malays were supposed to have raised their mast, and the natives chant a pidgin variety of Malay which seems to be a version of Malay chanting. When the body is raised from the ground to be taken to the grave, two men say a Malay prayer over it.—The prayer is supposed to mean, according to my native informants, that they are asking for a safe journey for the soul, that no trouble will come to it, just as the Malay, in his prayer, asked for a safe voyage for his ship. This prayer was said by the Malays, according to native ideas, during a storm and before they left for their homelands.—The natives then dance a ceremonial pulling-up of the anchor while taking the body to the grave. A mast is raised over the grave as a memorial.

All this is of particular interest to the student of symbolism and ritual, since it clearly demonstrates some of the methods by which abstract ideas are put into concrete form and the various elements of culture integrated into a single unity in the minds of the people and in their group actions.

Some of the coastal clans have added articles of Malay material culture to their list of multiple totems. Each clan has a large number of totems which are ranked according to their emotional mythological importance. The Malay totems usually belong to the garma class, which is the lowest and can be seen by women. This is not so much the direct influence of Malay culture as the inclusion of new facts into Murngin classifications. The whole of their world (animal, plant, mineral, cultural, et cetera), has been symbolized into a totemic system. It would be strange indeed if the culture did not find a place for the Malay and the contents of his culture. At present there is a tendency to substitute the white man and his civilization for the Malay in the totemic system.

Malay Influence on the Racial Stock.—It is surprising to the investigator

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to find little evidence of miscegenation among the blacks and Malays in northeast Arnhem Land. The writer measured a large number of individuals in this area and found only two individuals who might be classed as hybrid. The two skin colors were slightly lighter than the darker type of black, but no lighter than the type of pure Australoid found in the interior regions where there was no opportunity of racial mixture. These individuals also had the mongoloid broad head and straight hair. Their brachycephalism clearly marked them off from the dolichocephalic heads of the pure aborigines. The straight hair, however, was little different from that of the pure strains. There are several reasons for this lack of interbreeding. The first is the insistence of the people east of the Goyder River that their females remain monogamous and faithful. They are very different from the peoples to the west of this river, who center around the Liverpool River and Cape Don, where wife-lending and a kind of primitive prostitution are common.

The writer, although he was frequently offered the wives of many of the men from the western regions as a friendly gesture, was never embarrassed by such offers from the more eastern people, except by two men, both of whom had lived for long periods of their lives in the west, and were considered "low fellows" by their tribesmen. This insistence on the faithfulness of wives chiefly accounts for the lack of mixture. A large proportion of the white men who sailed along the Arafura coast have been killed or attacked by the natives, because, in almost every case, of a white man's attempting to have illegal sexual relations with native women. The same conditions must have prevailed during Malay times. All the native informants insist on this fact.

In addition to the above reason for lack of racial mixture, there is the fact that the Malays also displayed a considerable wisdom in preventing trouble from breaking out between the two races through attempts to interfere with native women. They organized a system of guards or "policemen" to watch their men and prevent them from having contact with native women. All the blacks in this whole area speak very highly of the Malay traders, for they always mention first their generosity and immediately after this they say, "They let our women alone." In the same breath they will tell a white man whom they consider to be their friend that the white and Japanese traders are "no good" because they are stingy in their trade and are always trying to rape their women.

A number of white pearlers have been through the islands and along the coast, but no Caucasian half-castes are found in the region east of the Goyder River and north of Groote Eylandt. When one knows the "barnyard morals" of the average white trader, this is eloquent testimony to the high standards of native morality and of the chastity of their women. The lack of white hybrids is also explained by the feeling the

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whites of the north have for the black men of this district. The killing of several whites and Japanese has put a heavy fear in the hearts of all intruders into these parts. The natives have a reputation for treachery, largely because of their ambushing of several white pearlers and night attacks on a few Japanese boats, where all the men were killed, in retaliation for mistreatment of their women.

These last few remarks have been added further to substantiate the possible causes which prevented race mixture when the Malays were coming into North Australia. Since the rapacious civilization of the West cannot produce half-castes in this region, it is less probable that the more gentle Malay culture would produce racial hybrids in North Australia. Tindale, in his article on the Groote Eylandt natives, says that the Malays were interested in acquiring native women to take home with them. I can find no evidence of this among the Murngin and their neighboring tribes. A number of native men, however, did go to Macassar and the other islands whence the Malays had come. The writer met one or two of these men who had served as pearlers on seasonal voyages on Malay boats.

The influence of the Malay race and culture has not been important in northeastern Arnhem Land. There are but slight traces of hybridization in race or culture. The greatest influence is found in the material culture, and the least in the social institutions of Murngin civilization. Compared with the total number of traits found in aboriginal culture, those added from the more eastern civilization are very few indeed and, with the exception of the dugout complex, have had no significant influence on the development of Murngin civilization. On the other hand, when an examination is made of the even larger number of traits found in Malay culture, and they are contrasted with the very few adopted by the Murngin from the Malays, it becomes even further demonstrable that Murngin civilization remained very near to what it was before the Malay arrived, and that the Malay gave little of his own civilization to aboriginal Australia.

History of Burial Customs

The Murngin now finally dispose of their dead by placing the bones in a symbolically carved hollow log and planting the log upright within the camp. This is true of all the tribes except those in Cape Wessel Island, where the natives, after wrapping the bones of the dead in paper bark, put them in rock shelters. I am told by island natives that the rock shelter is used also in the interior back of Blue Mud Bay. All the natives to the west, such as the Gunwingu and Maung, use the hollow-log method of disposal. Historically this situation raises an interesting problem of priority of burial customs. The distribution of the rock burial method in the far

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201 Sleep—left hand to the head, with the head cocked on one side.
Dead—left hand with the palm half open, the thumb and finger forming a partly closed circle.
The end—move the hand from side to side before the face, then downward.
Run—fists clenched, with the two hands moving up and down in front of the chest.
Eat—gesture of holding food in the fingers and putting in the mouth.
To show dislike—turn the head to the right and shake it and push the left hand out to the side.
To announce the arrival of a number of people—move two hands over the face.
Drink—move the open hand to the head and put the head back.
Shedding blood for a totem—arms flexed and fingers like knife cutting under part of the arm.
Digging—elbow out at an angle with the hand pointing down and the fingers moving like a dog digging a hole.

APPENDIX VII

ANTHROPOMETRY

144 During the period of my field work in North Australia I measured close to four hundred aborigines. The geographical sections from which the groups came were the general areas around Port Darwin, the Victoria River, Melville and Bathurst Islands, the Murngin area (northeast Arnhem Land), and the southern part of the mouth of the Roper River. Generally speaking, it can be said that these natives show few differences from those of Central and Southern Australia; and there seems to be little or no connection between Australia and Melanesia or Papua or the other Pacific groups, with the possible exception of New Caledonia where there do seem to be indications of Australian relations. The results of the research are now being written up for future publication.[1]

141 The stature of the five geographical groups measured by me in North Australia varies from 166.50 centimeters to 169.62. The sitting height varies from 82.00 centimeters to 83.08. The biacromial, from 34.64 to 36.62. Chest depth, from 17.72 to 19.08. Chest breadth, from 23.40 to 24.90. Head length varies from 188.79 millimeters to 193.86. Head breadth, from 134.02 to 138.88. Head height, from 120.30 to 127.71. Head circumference, from

[1] See W. W. Howells and W. Lloyd Warner, "Anthropometry of the Natives of Arnhem Land and the Australian Race Problem," *Peabody Museum Papers*, 1933, Vol. XVI, No. 1.

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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The Aborigines of East Arnhem Land

A BOOMERANG

A nation's soul at stake!
Now seared and hurt with ill;
Bereft of stick and stake,
By callous alien's will.

A nation's soul at stake!
And that the white man's soul!
He must atonement make
Ere he redeem it whole.

—J.E.P.

Present Condition and Possible Future

144 The natives of East Arnhem Land belong to the Aboriginal race which, prior to white settlement, occupied the whole of this Australian continent. Though these north coastal districts were, during a long past, frequently visited by maritime traders from the Malay Archipelago, there is no evidence of any racial admixture sufficient to produce a variation of physical or mental characteristics, but some few cultural traces of these visitations are to be observed.

582 616 617 The social organisation of these people conforms in general principle to that which is familiar to all students of this Australian race. There are, first of all, two individually exogamous, but intermarrying moieties, in this case known as Yirritcha and Dua respectively. Each of these moieties is divided into four sub-sections, making eight sub-sections in all. Marriage can only be between a man and a woman of opposite moieties, and is further regulated by the fact that a man of a particular sub-section of one moiety may marry only a woman of a particular sub-section of the opposite moiety. (See page 8.)

[611] The moieties are determined by patrilineal descent, but the sub-sections by matrilineal descent. That is, the children of a Yirritcha man will also belong to the Yirritcha moiety, but their sub-section is determined by that of the mother, irrespective of that of the father. Therefore, a Yirritcha man of the Bungardi sub-section normally marries a Dua woman of the Kumandjan sub-section. Their children belong to the father's moiety, and so are Yirritcha, but belong to the Bulain sub-section. A

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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CHAPTER 2

THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

142 Who are the people of Arnhem Land? What is the pattern of their life, the background against which these events took place?

The physical characteristics of the Australian Aborigines as a whole are well known – their chocolate-brown skin, wavy hair, slightly prognathoid features and rather broad nostrils. The people of the Arnhem Land coast show some differences from those of the immediate inland and of the centre. Food of all kinds is more plentiful, and fresh water easier to find; and so they are rather more solidly built, with heavier legs and broader shoulders than the "desert" natives. Their skin appears to be darker, al- [144] though here and there are lighter individuals who show the influence of part-Malayan or Macassan descent. Generally speak- [152] ing, they are lively and excitable and show emotion more readily 578 than their southern neighbours; all along this coast the tribes have a long history of "blood feuds", kept up between one family and another, or among various clans. They prefer to dispose of their enemies by open killings rather than by the secret work of magical spells – although these too, it is said, are freely employed.

105 Since on this fertile coast the Aborigines do not have to exert themselves quite so strenuously as those in more barren and inhospitable regions, they can devote more time to material culture – to weapons, cave and bark paintings, and a wide range of sacred objects. For this reason, too, we find numbers of clan and tribal groups within a comparatively small area. Tribal territories are more restricted than in the semi-desert areas where men and women must be almost continuously on the move in their search for food.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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any extent with the visitors, and Professor Lloyd Warner used such statements as a basis for his opinion that the Malay traders did not interfere with native women.[8] But the women themselves offer a different point of view, and so do the songs and stories which have survived to the present day. Men are often unwilling to admit that they themselves, or people of their group, were induced by threats or by liquor to barter their wives and daughters, or that they allowed them to go to the traders because of their ties of friendship and trading relations. Often they attempt to "cover up" the fact that certain people are half or part Macassan, by insisting that their light skin has a spiritual rather than a purely physical explanation. The women, however, are more candid, and many of the older ones among them openly regret the passing of the Indonesian traders. Such an apparent contradiction is not unusual in matters of this kind, when casual liaisons have been carried out over a long period and then brought suddenly to an end through pressure of external circumstances.

The contacts of these Baijini and Indonesian people may have influenced the temperament of the coastal Aborigines, for they are (broadly speaking) more hasty tempered and emotional than the southern and central Aborigines, given to aggressive displays of anger and elementary warfare. The physical effects, however, apart from the infusion of an alien strain in the Aboriginal stock, seem to have been negligible; their indulgence in alcoholic drinks appears to have had no effect upon their general well-being,[9] while venereal diseases are virtually unknown in this eastern region.[10] This contrasts with conditions at Goulburn Island and Oenpelli, in western Arnhem Land, where the prevalence of venereal diseases (especially gonorrhoea) seems to have led to a high incidence of sterility, and so to a declining birth rate. Western Arnhem Land Aborigines have a reputation of being sexually rather lax, whereas various writers have expressed the opinion that the eastern Arnhem Landers are less willing to trade their womenfolk and have consequently been better able to regulate their sexual relations with "outside" people. Actually this impression seems to have its origin in the fact that the sexual pattern of both societies shows certain differences. The one is

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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177 resources and develop their own internal economy, the clans to
649 become more closely integrated and the group as a whole more
178 self-sufficient. They were no longer dependent primarily on export and import, spending a great deal of their time around the Macassan settlements. Such outside goods as did find their way into the society were soon absorbed. It is probable, too, that their womenfolk had far less sexual contact with Europeans and Japanese than with the Indonesian traders. There were never as many of these newcomers on the coast at one time as there had been Malays and Macassans, and the Aborigines were never on such intimate terms with them as they had been with their predecessors.

However, the growing intensity of Mission contact, and the presence during the war years of large numbers of European troops, seem to have destroyed the natives' resistance to alien infiltration. Soon the reaction set in – actually the culminative effect of long centuries of contact with peoples who were culturally and psychologically different to themselves; and the result was gradually increasing dependence on Europeans. The desire for new ideas, and for all the material benefits they could achieve, was accentuated: but these were to be obtained only at the expense of their own culture and ideology. Although in the past they had learnt much about the successful absorption of alien belief and practice, these latter years found them wanting in knowledge concerning the practical application of their experience to modern problems. The deviation between Aboriginal and European cultures was greater than that between Aboriginal and Macassan, so that the present day finds these people largely unprepared for the changes that are upon them. Important aspects of their traditional life are disappearing. Religious fervour for the "old gods" is weakening; law and order are becoming more and more a matter of external control; and general disillusionment, with increased sexual laxity, accentuates these features that accompany a period of transition.

144 While the effects of long alien contact are only too apparent
164 insofar as the native culture is concerned, the direct physical effects (excluding the effect of Asiatic and Indonesian strains on the Aboriginal stock) are few.[20] The fact that venereal disease are

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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rare in this north-east region[27] seems hard to believe when we consider the extent of Asiatic, Indonesian and European contact, and the sexual intimacy of the Aboriginal women with members of all these groups. Physically, these people remain more or less intact,[28] and increasing sterility has not followed contact as it has at Goulburn Island in western Arnhem Land. But there is a danger today, with the growing association these natives have with the Goulburn Island people, with the "crew-boys" on Mission luggers, and with native and European men and women in Darwin, that venereal disease will be introduced and disseminated. Aboriginal attitudes toward medical attention often preclude an early treatment of such cases, and the disease is allowed to gain much ground before it can be controlled and eradicated.

A word may be said of depopulation in this region. The reasons for this are not the same as at Goulburn Island, or on the cattle stations in the central north-western area of the Northern Territory,[29] but may perhaps be found in the warlike habits of the eastern Arnhem Landers.[30] Constant feuding over a long period is said to have reduced especially the male population, and brought about the extinction or amalgamation of many clans. This warring propensity led to a surplus of women, and had a direct bearing on sexual behaviour. For example, large polygynous families were formed; and these are conventional even today. It was perhaps because of this that the Aborigines were more ready to allow the Macassans and Malays access to their womenfolk: possibly there would have been far more dissension between these people and the Indonesian traders had their social structure been primarily monogamous.

[pp. 26-176 not processed]